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SUBJECT: CODEL TSONGAS: MEETING WITH AFGHAN INTERIOR
MINISTER ATMAR, APRIL 9, 2009

11. (SBU) Summary: In an April 9 meeting with CODEL Tsongas, Interior Minister Atmar praised the U.S. Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) for the training it is providing to the Afghan National Police (ANP) and his ministry, described the training programs in some detail, and made a strong appeal for more support on ANP expansion. He defended his record on anti-corruption by describing major initiatives he has taken to clean up the police force, especially its leadership, and to build capacity to go after high-level corruption (particularly through an envisioned "Major Crimes Task Force" (MCTF). Atmar wove the theme of ANP expansion throughout his long, eloquent presentation. End Summary.

ATMAR ON POLICE TRAINING AND EXPANSION OF THE ANP

12. (SBU) On April 9, CODEL Tsongas met with Minister Hanif Atmar at the Interior Ministry (MOI). The Minister expressed thanks to the United States for dispatching its "brave uniformed military" to Afghanistan and for continuing American support of the Afghan National Police (ANP), "often the only defense against terrorists and criminals." Atmar said that, under CSTC-A's tutelage, the ANP was engaged in individual training and institution-building, with the police receiving a "full package, based on the best knowledge" for what they have to do. The three key Afghan security institutions are the Afghan National Army (ANA), the National Directorate of Security (NDS) intelligence, and the ANP. The ANP had not yet achieved the success of the other two but, with the help of CSTC-A, would do so, Atmar said.

13. (SBU) Atmar briefly described categories of police training. He singled out the Focused District Development (FDD) program as the most important training provided by CSTC-A to the regular Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP). Under FDD, local police are pulled from their districts for two months for drug testing, biometrics recording and training in basic skills. When redeployed, the AUP units were the most critical element was the Police Mentor Teams (PMT) which accompanied the police on missions, ensured that the techniques they learned stuck, and relieved their sense of isolation. Atmar commented that the ANA only fought when it was sure it had the ability to do so, Atmar said, but the regular ANP found they had no choice other than to fight. Atmar said the Afghan Border Police (ABP) also were training using the same principles as the AUP. Sixteen thousand ABP must receive that instruction. The Minister said that the "most sophisticated" training, however, went to the elite Afghan Civil Order Police (ANCOP), which received 4 months of more intense and varied instruction.

14. (SBU) In addition, Atmar said, the MOI and ANP received assistance on reforming traditional systems and institution-building, with an emphasis on rooting out corruption. Selection of the leadership, which was not previously based on merit, was under a new system. Atmar characterized the whole effort as "not just training, but fundamental reform of the entire structure." This effort was

complicated because the ANP was fully occupied fighting insurgents and eradicating poppy, doing security rather than law enforcement. And there were insufficient resources to expand the ANP rapidly in time for the August elections.

15. (SBU) Minister Atmar pitched strongly for ANP expansion. The ANP, he reiterated, must take a "quantum leap" forward, but resources were lacking. Atmar said he received strong political support and understanding for what he was doing, such as firing and prosecuting 10 percent of the police leadership over the last four months, but he needed more trainers and mentors, as envisioned under President Obama's Strategic Review to create a bigger police force. The ANP must be vastly expanded from its current size of 1.3 police for every 1000 Afghans, a ratio far below other countries which do not face insurgency, narcotics, and rapidly rising crime. President Obama, he said, was clear when announcing the Strategic Review outcomes that he backed expansion of the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF), but did not mention specific targets. There was no shortage of volunteers for the ANP, which showed a measure of popular trust in the institution, but the Minister said that he needed international support to expand and train a new NCO and officer corps.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

16. (SBU) Referring to an April 8 NY Times article "Corruption Undercuts Hopes for Afghan Police," the CODEL opened a discussion on that topic. Atmar said he was aware of the article and that it was ironic that in Ghazni (from where it was date-lined), he had fired over 60 ANP, officers and

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patrolmen, which had led to a 90 percent drop in reported corruption. He defended his record by noting that several major anti-corruption initiatives were underway within the MOI. First, he had requested the FBI to build a Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF) in the MOI which would become "Afghanistan's FBI." The FBI agreed and had begun work, but support from the CODEL and elsewhere for additional resources would help. Once the structure is in place, the MCTF targets would go beyond senior police officers to Afghanistan's leadership in the Parliament and cabinet. For seven years there had been much talk about bold steps to go after high-level corruption, but no resources were available, Atmar said. His invitation to the FBI was to do this together with the MOI until MOI could do it alone.

17. (SBU) A second major initiative, Atmar said, was his plan for a 300 person Afghan MOI inspector general (IG) corps to enforce accountability on personnel "ghosts" (police who are carried on the rolls but not active), weapons, salaries and performance at the district level. He had asked the international community to deploy inspectors to train the IG candidates for this Afghan initiative, including a request he made to the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). He specifically wanted 34 international auditors, one per province, who could monitor ANP performance and give the public confidence in ANP reform. There were a number of institutional corruption problems, but the key, he said, was cleaning up the police leadership. If that were done there would be no diversion of assets. To that end, he was requiring top leaders to explain their assets or risk prosecution. He had provided his own personal data to the Afghan High Office of Oversight. In addition, he was strengthening the police intelligence capacity to review the leadership and also asked the FBI to help with polygraphing.

18. (SBU) Atmar apologized for explaining his approach on corruption at such length, but he was dealing with a historic problem. He had witnessed that when the U.S. and others originally pressed for reform in the ANA and intelligence services, anyone fired from those organizations had moved to the ANP, where the U.S. was not involved at the time. A

blind eye had been turned when the focus was on the Afghan Army and he was now trying to get rid of people capable of mobilizing demonstrations if they felt threatened. His point, he said, was that he was pursuing a comprehensive strategy against corruption to bring about a cultural change, for which he needed resources.

WOMEN IN THE ANP, ANCOP, AND MORE ON EXPANSION

¶9. (SBU) CODEL Tsongas pressed on a number of other topics, such as the role of women in the ANP. Atmar said that there was culturally already such a role, but he was not yet training enough women, and needed an aggressive recruitment and training program for women. He said that he would draw on the experience of CSTC-A's BG Armstrong, a woman, for this program. There were 700 women in the ANP in a taskhil of 82 thousand. He then used his chalkboard to outline the whole organization of the ANP in greater detail. Asked about the ANCOP role, Atmar said they were gendarmerie-like police, charged with handling civil unrest (while the AUP handled community-level policing). ANCOP's special role was in the FDD program. When AUP police were overwhelmed and in need of training, ANCOP substituted for them in the districts while the AUP went through the FDD program. He explained that in rural areas, the ANA was often not present, so there the ANP was used almost entirely for security, not law enforcement.

¶10. (SBU) Atmar turned the conversation back to ANP expansion, estimating that he needed roughly a doubling of the ANP in two years, preferably one, to fight a brutal enemy and simultaneously reform the police and ministry. He illustrated the brutality of the enemy by recounting the story of how early in 2009 young girls had had acid sprayed in their faces while walking to school. He asserted that this was the work of a Pakistan army major who had paid assailants USD 2000 for every girl sprayed. Taliban crossing from Pakistan were armed with heavy machine guns, which made the ANP "sitting ducks". He acknowledged that he was training soldiers, not police in the traditional sense, but that was necessary under the circumstances. The equipment provided by the U.S. was welcome, and indeed, for the first time ever the Afghanistan people welcomed foreign troops, not simply because the Taliban were so bad, but because the values shown by American soldiers were admirable. The U.S. had provided eight major training centers, and there were other sites around the country, including a police academy in Kabul, but still more help was required. His dream project, he said, was to staff the academy with U.S. trainers as faculty members, including women officers.

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WHO ELSE IS HELPING ON POLICE TRAINING?

¶11. (SBU) Asked which other countries could or were helping with police training, Atmar rattled off an answer. France was particularly good, but its offer was small. Italy was a relatively large contributor (a distant second after the U.S.) with its carabinieri trainers. Canada was small and centered on Kandahar. The U.K. focused more on counter-narcotics. The Dutch were good, but too few in numbers. Germany was a "fantastic" contributor to many aspects of the ANP, but also too small a contingent. From Islamic neighboring nations only money was needed. The picture was captured when you considered that of the 55 FDD districts, all were partnered by the U.S. except 4-5 by other nations. Atmar concluded by saying increasing the size of the ANP before elections was pressing. Afghans are willing to join the ANP as soldiers, gendarmerie, or community police, but the money, training spaces, and trainers are not yet available. When Congressman said a constituent in Duchess County who had lost a brother on his third tour of service had urged him to "make it worth it," Atmar said that was absolutely right. Every night, he said, he looked at the ANP losses and felt an ethical responsibility to build a prepared and reformed ANP. This was a winnable goal if the

right decisions were made.

¶12. (U) Participants: Minister Atmar was accompanied to this meeting by his Chief of Staff, Mr. Wayand, and a military aide. On the U.S. side, Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA), Rep. John Hall (D-NY), Rep. Larry Kissell (D-NC), Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO), Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Staff members Bob DeGrasse and Josh Holly, CDA Ambassador Frank Ricciardone, CSTC-A BG Anne Macdonald, and Embassy POL-MIL Counselor Bob Clarke participated.

¶13. (U) CODEL Tsongas did not review this cable before departure.

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